



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.43

Subject:	Supervised and Unsupervised Visitation Between Child/Youth, Family, and Siblings
Authority:	TCA 37-5-106, TCA 37-4-201; P.L. 109-239 (Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care); TCA 37-4-201-207.
Standards:	DCS Practice Model Standards – 6-510C, 12-400, 12-401, 12-402, and 12-403.
Application:	All Family Service Workers and supervisory staff serving children/youth who are In Out-Of-home care

Policy Statement:

Children and youth, regardless of adjudication, in the legal custody of the Department of Children's Services shall have the opportunity to visit their families and/or siblings, unless there is a court order that limits visitation. Visitation may be supervised or unsupervised based on the court order and the individual circumstances of each case. The safety and well being of a child is the primary concern during the process of determining if visitation is to be supervised or unsupervised. Visitation shall afford parents and family the opportunity to demonstrate parenting skills necessary to ensure the safe return of the child to the home; and shall be conducted in the most natural setting possible, preferably the family's home. Unless a court order indicates differently, visitation between children and their family shall be no less than 4 hours per month.

This policy also applies to children/youth in the legal custody of the State, their families, and siblings who are subject to inter-jurisdictional placements under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

Purpose:

To reduce trauma to children, visitation is critical in helping reduce the trauma of separation to children and is essential if performance for children is to occur as quickly as possible.

Procedures:

A. Developing a Visitation Schedule

1. The Family Service Worker (FSW) assigned to the child/youth shall meet as soon as possible with the child's parents and/or family members to develop their team and initiate the planning process. (See [DCS Policy 31.7 Building, Engaging, and Preparing the Child and Family Team](#)).
2. During this meeting with the family the FSW shall arrange a visitation schedule between the child and the family. Visitation between the child, family, and any siblings shall be allowed as soon as possible. There shall be no "waiting period" before children and families are allowed visitation.

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Visitation times should be mutually agreed upon and to the extent possible, coordinate among and between the parents work schedules and children's school schedules.4. Visitation should occur in a scheduled and predictable manner. This practice helps parent(s) and other family members coordinate transportation and planning of other activities around the established visitation schedule. It also assists children as they adapt to the many changes and losses they experience in foster care.5. The FSW should ensure that siblings are included in family visits. This includes siblings who remain at home and those placed together or separately in foster care. When it is not possible to include all siblings, separate arrangements must be made for siblings to visit with one another.6. If a child is placed in a Private Provider the FSW will be an active partner in facilitate conversation between the private provider agency and the family to determine specifics of visitations that include dates, times, and plans of supervision during visitation opportunities.
B. Unsupervised Visitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The FSW shall work with the family to select the most comfortable, natural setting possible for unsupervised visitation. Unsupervised visitation will most often be in the family's home. If there are reasons why the family's home would not be appropriate, unsupervised visitation may take place in the child's resource home or another neutral setting such as a park. The DCS office is not an appropriate setting for unsupervised visitation.2. The FSW should assist the child's family members with planning activities for unsupervised visitation that will help maintain, improve and strengthen family relationships.3. Telephone contact should be encouraged as appropriate to maintain further contact between family members. Telephone contact is not a replacement for visitation.4. When it is necessary for treatment purposes to place children outside of their neighborhood, community or region, the FSW must take an active role to ensure that family members have access to transportation to visit children.5. For any child placed within a Private Provider or Group Home it is necessary for the FSW to work closely with the facility to determine eligibility for passes. If the child/youth has been adjudicated as delinquent the FSW should follow the procedures outlined in DCS Policy 12.5, Passes for Youth Adjudicated Delinquent.
C. Supervised Visitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Family Service Worker (FSW) assigned to the child/youth shall meet with the child/youth's parent(s) and/or family to develop a schedule for supervised

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	<p>visitation.</p> <p>2. The FSW should discuss the issues of supervised visitation with their team leader prior to setting a schedule with the child/youth's parent(s) and/or family. Supervised visitation may be appropriate in the following situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The child is in care as a result of a court finding of severe abuse.b) The child is in care as a result of non-adjudicated severe abuse but there is a child protective services investigation that has resulted in an indicated case of severe abuse.c) A court order for other reasons specifically requires supervised visitation between a child and his or her family.d) Other documented reasons exist that compromise a child's safety and justify supervised visits. <p>3. The FSW shall arrange for visitation and other contacts between parents, family members and children in foster care even when these visits require supervision to ensure the child's safety, unless the child is in full DCS guardianship or there is a court ordered visitation restriction. The Child Abuse Review Team (CART) may also make recommendations in regards to supervised visitation, however; no restrictions can be initiated or terminated without a court order. (See to DCS Policy 14.6, Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT) and DCS Policy 14.17, Child Abuse Review Team (CART)).</p> <p>4. To facilitate supervised visits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The FSW must adhere to the same basic principles as outlined in section <i>B</i> above.b) The FSW must be honest and clear when explaining to the family that visits will be supervised, how these will be supervised, who will be supervising them, and why they are being supervised.c) The FSW and other identified and approved staff may supervise visitation. Individuals supervising visitation must be able to protect a child from harm or abduction during the visitation and be able to exercise control and intervene if required during the visit.d) The FSW or other staff supervising visitation shall use form CS-0594, Visitation Observation Checklist to document observed interaction between parent(s), family members and children.e) FSW's must continually assess the appropriateness of requesting unsupervised visits. These requests must be made of the court and documented in the case file.
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D. Sibling Visitation Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Siblings who are not placed in the same resource home or agency shall be allowed to visit face-to-face in either the parents' home, the resource home in which one of the siblings is living, a relative home, or the most home-like setting otherwise available.2. Visits shall take place as frequently as is necessary and appropriate to facilitate sibling relationships but no less frequently than once each month for no less than one hour in duration (unless the visit is shortened to protect the safety or well-being of the child). Visits should be as long as possible to support the on-going relationship of the children and may include overnight or weekend visits.3. This standard shall not apply to situations where there is a court order restricting either the frequency of visitation or the duration of visitation due to safety or other reasons. Such restriction shall be documented in the case file by a signed court order and as prescribed in Section G of this document.
E. Modification to Visitation Schedules	<p>FSW's shall adhere to the following procedures for modifying visitation schedules when the visitation is court ordered or when the visitation is requested to be less than 4 hours a month, or any changes to the visitation schedule.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If an emergency situation involving the immediate health or safety of the child exists, FSW's may immediately terminate or cancel a visit.2. If the court agrees to a modification of the visitation schedule the Permanency Plan and Functional Family Assessment (FFA) shall be modified to reflect the new visitation schedule and the modified Permanency Plan shall be submitted to the court for ratification.3. If a visitation schedule is modified the FSW should send confirmation of changes of the visitation schedule to the child(ren), the child's family and the resource parents and/or private provider agency.4. Denial of visitation may not be used to manage behavior however, modifications in the visitation plan may be therapeutically necessary.5. Any modifications in the visitation schedule shall be documented as prescribed in Section G of this document.
F. Visitation under the ICPC	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Children and youth, regardless of adjudication, in the legal custody of the Department of Children's Services shall have the opportunity to visit their families and/or siblings, unless there is a court order that limits visitation. These opportunities for visitation are also available and valuable to children who are placed in other states under the ICPC or whose siblings are placed into other States under the ICPC.

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	2. Documentation of a proposed visitation plan, including any proposed schedule and requirements for un-supervised or supervised arrangements are to be documented in the Permanency Plan by the FSW, which becomes part of the record and the ICPC referral. Further information regarding Visitation under the ICPC is contained in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Practice and Procedure Manual.
G. Data Systems Documentation	<p>1. The plan established for visitation between the child(ren), the parents, and/or any siblings should be documented in the CS-0577 Permanency Plan, CS-0777 Family Functional Assessment and the CS-0747 Child and Family Team Meeting Summary form for all children in the custody/care of DCS.</p> <p>2. At any time that is determined by courts, professionals or the Child and Family Team (CFT) that it is detrimental for children, families, and/or siblings to visit with one another, all documentation should be placed into the case file and recorded under the Visitation Restrictions icon in TNKids.</p> <p>3. Events not documented elsewhere in TNKids or needing fuller explanation are entered into case recordings which shall be recorded and completed within 30 days of date of occurrence.</p>

Forms:	CS-0594 Visitation Observation Checklist CS-0747 Child and Family Team Meeting Summary CS-0777 Family Functional Assessment and Guide
Collateral Documents:	DCS Policy 31.7 Building, Engaging, and Preparing the Child and Family Team DCS Policy 12.5 Passes for Youth Adjudicated Delinquent DCS Policy 14.6, Child Protective Investigative Team (CPIT) DCS Policies 14.17, Child Abuse Review Team (CART) The Interstate Compact on The Placement Of Children Practices and Procedural Manual

Glossary:	
Family Functional Assessment	The Family Functional Assessment is an assessment tool designed to help guide the FSW in gathering information on the past, present and future of a family by continuously evaluating the family's strengths and underlying needs, concerns and challenges and to build supportive teams with children and families which will last beyond agency involvement; and lastly, lead to the development of individualized plans

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	utilizing family strengths and solutions.
Family	The parents to which the child was born, blood kin, or other individuals that have played a significant role in the child's life

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